

## **AVERSIVE RACISM AND CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE WITH GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

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### **Abstract**

Reiterating the urgent need for the development of anti-racist practice with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, this discussion paper develops the conclusions presented by Allen and Riding (2018) in *The Fragility of Professional Competence* report. Viewing their findings through the lens of aversive racism, we aim to shed some light on a rarely seen paradox in child protection. A paradox that exists when child protection practitioners who, by nature of their professional status, publicly sympathise with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities as victims of injustice, support the principle of equality, and regard themselves as non-prejudiced, but simultaneously possess negative feelings, views and beliefs about them. Emphasising the opportunity for children's guardians, family court advisers and independent social workers to identify racism and diversify power systems, we introduce three characteristics that represent important initial steps to address the intersecting oppressions that many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and families face. Concentrating on the opportunity for change, we end the discussion with a brief description of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association; a group that aims to challenge racism and enable child protection professionals to stand with children and families at grassroots and to promote their right to live self-determined lives without fear, discrimination or retaliation.

### **Introduction**

In 2018, Allen and Riding presented a preliminary analysis of the scale and nature of child protection practice with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in England. Summarising extensive fieldwork research, that included focus-group interviews with 155 child protection professionals, they explained that explicit and implicit discrimination was a contributing factor to the institutional racism experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.....

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